



PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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IDENTITY THIEVES CHARGED

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced that on June 19, 2002, a federal grand jury at Phoenix, Arizona, returned a nine count indictment against MICHAEL HERMAN BLACKWELL, dob 1-4-66; TERESA BLACKWELL, dob 1-22-66; BONNIE RAE RODRIGUEZ, dob 2-23-67; and ANNA MERIE REAVES, dob 1-31-68, all of Phoenix, Arizona. The indictment alleges that the defendants conspired to steal personal identifying information, and then used that information to defraud businesses. The indictment also includes separate charges of misuse of Social Security Numbers, making false statements to a bank, and using personal identifying information of another person. According to the earlier Complaint in the case, some of the defendants stole personal identifying information from their employers, in one case a bank and in another a medical facility. Three of defendants were previously arrested on the Complaint and released; Reaves was issued a summons.

The federal indictment charges all of the defendants with violating Title 18, United States Code, Section 371, Conspiracy, and Title 42, United States Code, Section 408(a)(7)(B), Misuse of a Social Security Number. Rodriguez and Teresa Blackwell are charged with violating Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028(a)(7), Identity Theft charges, while Rodriguez alone is charged with Making a False Statement to a Bank.

(MORE)

A conviction for Conspiracy carries a maximum penalty of 5 years, a \$250,000 fine or both. The penalty for misuse of a Social Security Number is 5 years, a \$250,000 fine or both. The penalty for False Statements to a Bank is 30 years, a \$1,000,000 fine or both. A conviction for Identity Theft carries a penalty of 15 years, a \$250,000 fine or both. Forfeiture of proceeds or instrumentalities used to commit the offenses is also provided.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Social Security Administration-Office of Inspector General, and the United States Secret Service.

The prosecution is being handled by Daniel R. Drake, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-02-626-PHX
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